



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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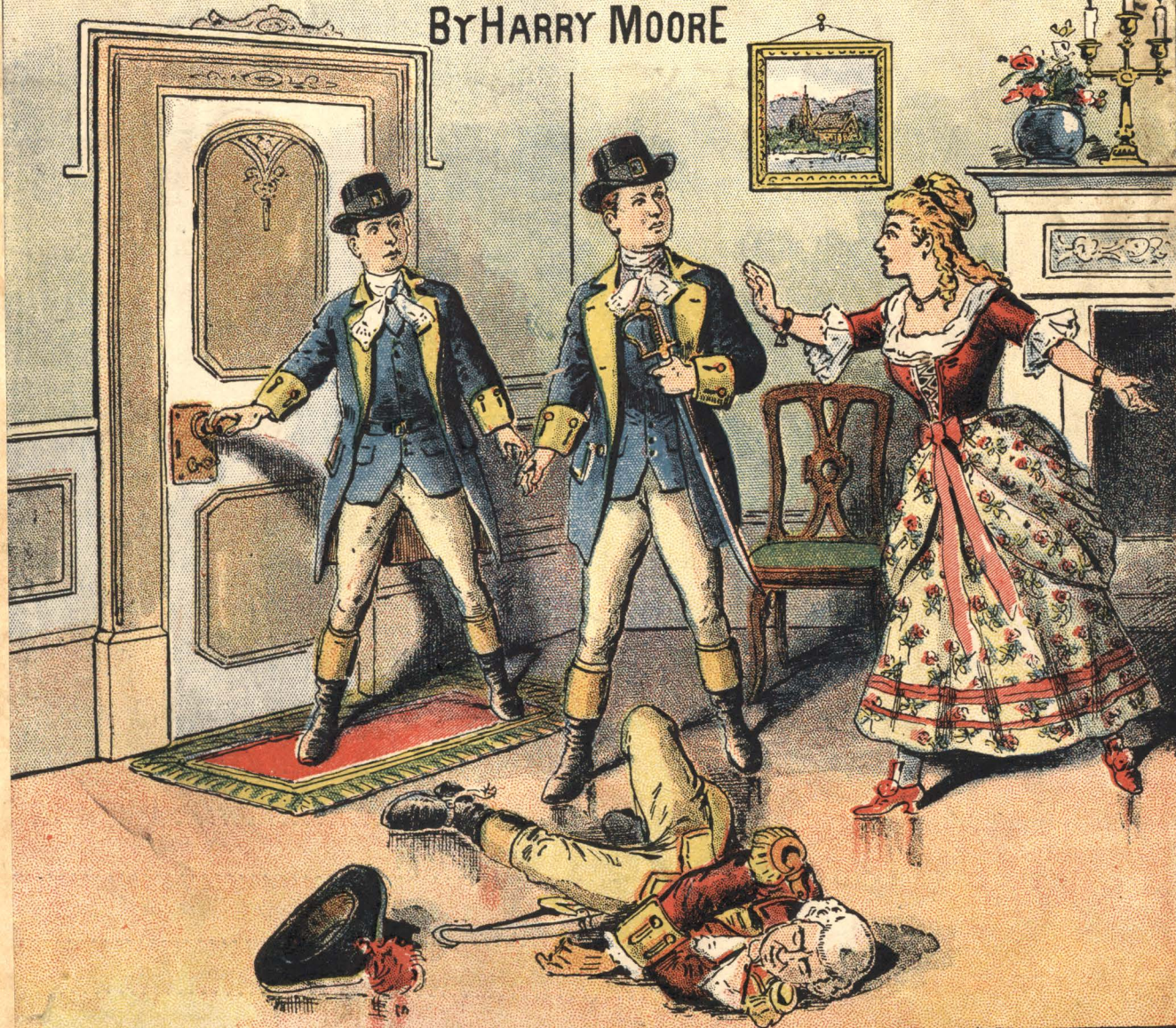
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NEW YORK, MARCH 22, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' PERIL; OR THREATENED FROM ALL SIDES.

BY HARRY MOORE



"You are threatened from all sides!" the girl said. "Come with me, and I will show you a hiding place!"

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THE LIBERTY BOYS' PERIL

OR,

Threatened from All Sides.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

CHAPTER I.

THE BOYS AND THE DRAGOONS.

"We are in a tight place, Dick!"

"Yes, but keep cool, Bob."

"That's easy to say, but hard to do."

"It is necessary, though. If we look the least bit flurried or uneasy the suspicions of the redcoats will be aroused, and then there is no telling what may happen."

"I know it; I'll keep as cool as possible, old man."

"Do so!"

Two youths of about eighteen years were walking along a road about a mile south of New Brunswick, in the State of New Jersey.

It was the month of May, in the year 1777—the time of the great struggle for independence and liberty by the American colonists.

It was a lovely May day.

Birds were singing, flowers were blooming, trees were budding.

Nature was truly smiling.

But war, cruel war with its hand of iron was over all, and the fields were more neglected than they should have been.

The New Jersey farmers did not have much heart in farming.

It was not very pleasant work to raise crops to feed the British soldiers with, without pay for the produce.

The two youths in question were dressed like typical farmer boys.

Their clothing was patched, their hats were old slouch affairs, and their shoes were full of holes and badly out of shape.

But the faces of the two were bright and handsome.

There was no disguising this fact.

The truth of the matter was that these two boys were patriots.

They were members of a company of youths of about their own age known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

And one of the two—Dick Slater—was captain of the company.

The other, Bob Estabrook, was Dick's nearest and dearest boy friend.

They had since joining the patriot army done much valuable work for the great cause, and they were bent on doing more good work now.

They were disguised as farmer boys for a purpose.

That purpose was to enable them to enter the town of New Brunswick, where fourteen thousand British had their headquarters.

They wished to learn what the intentions of the British were.

General Washington, through Dick, who had gone into the City of New York, right among the British, had learned that the British contemplated moving across New Jersey,

into Pennsylvania, where they would capture Philadelphia, the "rebel capital," as they called it.

General Washington had moved his army down from Morristown Heights, and taken up a position at Middlebrook, ten miles from New Brunswick.

Close watch had been kept of the British.

If they started to advance across the State of New Jersey it was Washington's purpose to first cut off their communications with New York, and then harass them until their forces should be broken up, when it would be possible to force them to surrender.

But for some reason the British delayed starting.

General Washington could not understand the cause of the delay.

He wished to learn the cause of it.

He thought that possibly General Howe, the commander-in-chief of the British, might have changed his plans.

If so, he wished to know it.

He wished also, if possible, to learn what the new plans might be.

If a general has knowledge of the plans of the enemy it becomes an easy matter to checkmate his moves.

Washington knew this, and he was always trying to learn the intentions of the enemy.

To accomplish this he used spies.

Among the spies whom he had made use of, and who had done a great deal to aid in encompassing the discomfiture of the British on a number of occasions were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook.

Dick, especially had been very successful as a spy.

There were men spies in the continental army, but Dick had gone places, and accomplished things, that the men had been unable to do.

So, on this morning of which we write, the commander-in-chief of the patriot army had sent for Dick.

He told him what he wished.

Dick had told him that he would enter upon the work of trying to learn the plans of the enemy at once.

And he had done so.

Bob had begged so hard to be allowed to accompany Dick that the youths had given in and consented.

Thus, we find them walking along the road a mile or so from New Brunswick.

And at the particular moment when we introduce them to the reader, they were confronted by a danger of some magnitude.

The danger in question consisted of a company of British dragoons, which was advancing down the road toward them, and only a couple of hundred yards distant.

The dragoons were advancing at a trot, and as they drew near, Dick and Bob stepped out to one side of the road, if to let them pass.

The dragoons did not pass, however.

Instead, they stopped, at a command from the captain and that individual looked at the youths sternly and said:

"Who are you two fellows, and where are you going?"

"We are not 'fellows'?" replied Dick boldly.

The captain frowned.

"You are insolent!" he said; "if you are not fellows what are you?"

"We are loyal king's men!"

Dick, by a supreme effort of acting, was enabled to make himself appear as though very proud to announce that he was a king's man.

Some of the redcoats snickered.

"Did you hear that, captain?" remarked one, with a derisive smile; "he said 'men.'"

Then a number laughed hoarsely.

"Well, I guess we are as good men as you are!" remarked Dick coolly, looking the fellow straight in the eye.

"Say, he's gamey, anyway!" remarked another, admiringly.

"Why, you ragged young rascal, if you talk saucily to me I'll get off my horse, and spank you with the flat side of my saber!" cried the dragoon whom Dick had addressed.

"Try it, and see how you come out!" said Dick promptly; "it will be you who will get spanked with your own saber!"

All the dragoons—with the exception of the one, of course—laughed at this, even the captain smiling.

The idea of the youth talking so boldly was amusing.

The dragoon in question did not laugh.

He turned very red in the face, and muttered something under his breath.

It was probably an oath.

"Great Jupiter, captain!" he exclaimed; "if you will only grant me permission, I will get down off my horse and teach this young sauce-box a lesson he won't forget in a hurry!"

It happened that the captain of the company, although very fierce-looking and stern on the surface, was a man who enjoyed sport of any kind, and this little episode certainly promised some sport.

"Go ahead, Jackson," he said calmly. "We will watch you, and see how you make out with the young fellow. Me thinks, judging from the expression of this young man's eyes, that you will not have such an easy time administering corporal punishment upon the youth as you seem to

link. Take care that he does not make his words good, and flail you with your own weapon!"

The captain winked at the others as he said this. Doubtless he did not expect any such occurrence.

He wished to arouse the dragoon and make him all the more eager to get at the youth.

If this was his plan it succeeded admirably.

With what sounded like a muttered imprecation, the man leaped off his horse.

"You're in for it, Dick!" whispered Bob, in excitement.

"I see I am, Bob," was the cool, indifferent reply, in a whisper. "Just wait, and see me make the redcoat wish he hadn't been so funny!"

Dick looked up at the captain.

"This is to be a fair and square affair?" he asked.

"How do you mean?" the captain asked; "fair and square in what way?"

"Why, I mean that as soon as I get him across my knee and go to spank him with the saber, you will not interfere and keep me from doing so?"

Dick spoke so confidently and innocently that the captain and the other dragoons roared with laughter.

"Did you hear that, Jackson?" the captain inquired.

Jackson's face was almost black with rage.

"Yes, I heard it!" he grated. "Have at you, you saucy young hound! You need a lesson in manners very badly, and I am going to give it to you!"

"Oh, if the lesson proves to be of value, I shall be quite willing to pay you for it," remarked Dick with the utmost coolness, and the dragoons roared again.

There was no time for more, however, as the angry dragoon leaped forward and attempted to seize Dick.

The youth was watching him, however, and easily evaded him by dodging.

"That's all right; dodge if you want to, you young rascal," growled the man; "I'll get you just the same!"

"Perhaps so!" was the cool reply.

Again the redcoat tried to seize Dick, and again the youth evaded him.

"Try again!" the youth remarked, tantalizingly.

The redcoat did so.

He made a fierce lunge at the youth, but Dick was out of the way in an instant.

The dragoons were laughing heartily.

It seemed like great sport to them.

"The youngster's all right!" remarked one.

"It's a case of 'catching before hanging'," remarked another.

"Spanking, you mean!" from still another, with a chuckle.

The redcoat was becoming almost wild with rage.

His failures to get hold of Dick, and the laughter of his comrades combined to render him very angry.

He was one of those headstrong, sensitive fellows, who imagine it fine fun to have sport at other people's expense, yet get red with anger in an instant if they are forced to furnish even the least little bit of amusement for the crowd.

He made another fierce lunge, in an attempt to get hold of Dick, but failed as before.

The youth was too nimble on his feet for his bigger and clumsier opponent.

"Don't you wish you could get hold of me?" laughed Dick.

"I'll get hold of you!" growled the redcoat.

"And then—what will you do?"

"What will I do?"

"Yes."

"I'll give you the worst spanking you have had in many a year, that's what I will do!"

"Really?"

The redcoat's answer was another plunge forward, but Dick was out of the way.

"You confounded young jumping-jack!" almost howled the redcoat; "you are only making it worse for yourself by doing as you are doing! When I get hold of you I shall lay on a few extra strokes to pay for this!"

"Oh, that is what you are figuring on doing, is it?" asked Dick.

"It is just what I am going to do!"

"You think you can do what you said you would do, then?"

"I know I can—and I am going to do it, too."

"You mean you think you are."

"I know I am."

Dick laughed.

"Well, just to show you how often a man thinks he knows a thing when he doesn't know it at all, I am going to let you get hold of me," said Dick, quietly. "Come ahead, and this time I shall not avoid you."

The redcoat leaped forward at once, and tried to grasp Dick.

The youth kept his word.

He did not try to avoid the dragoon.

Neither did he let the fellow grasp him.

Instead he performed a remarkable feat—a feat that made the eyes of the redcoats stick out in wondering amazement.

He caught the extended arms of the man in a grasp of iron and held the fellow, despite his struggles to free himself.

CHAPTER II.

DICK'S REMARKABLE FEAT.

The man twisted and squirmed, and did his best to get loose.

He could not do it.

Dick waited to give the fellow full opportunity to try, and looked him in the eyes and smiled.

As the realization came to him that he was powerless in the hands of the beardless youth—the despised country boy, as he supposed Dick to be—the redcoat turned pale.

He was mortified to think that he should be treated thus by a boy, and before the eyes of his comrades.

He would never hear the last of it.

He decided to make one desperate effort, and he did so.

He tried his best to wrench his wrists loose from Dick's grasp.

He strained and tugged.

All in vain.

He could not do it.

"What's the matter, Jackson?" asked the captain. "I thought you were going to spank the youth with the flat of your sabre."

"It seems that he has bitten off more than he can chew," said a redcoat.

Bob stood near, watching the scene with interest.

He knew how strong Dick was, and was not as surprised as were the redcoats.

"Well," said Dick, "are you willing to acknowledge that I am your master?"

"No, curse you!" grated the redcoat; "what! I, a man, acknowledge that a brat like you is my master?—never!"

"You had better do so," said Dick, quietly. "If you will acknowledge it, here before your comrades, and promise to be more careful in future how you address youths whom you happen to meet, I will let you go, and will forego the pleasure I had promised myself of spanking you with your own sabre. What do you say?"

Dick's tone was cool and calm.

He spoke as if he felt every confidence in his ability to do what he had said he could do.

Murmurs of admiration went up from the dragoons.

They could admire cool audacity, even in a youth.

"He's all right!" said one.

"He certainly is!" from another.

"He is a remarkable youth!" from still another.

The redcoat who had gotten himself into the difficulty with Dick was furious, however.

He snarled like a wild beast.

If he could have done so he would have bitten Dick's hands to force the youth to let go his hold. But he could not do this.

"I'll never do what you ask!" he growled. "I'll never acknowledge a young country clod to be my master in any way."

"So be it," said Dick, quietly; "since you will not acknowledge it, I shall be under the painful necessity of proving it even more decisively than I have already done."

With the words, Dick gave the redcoat's wrists a sudden wrenching twist.

It was a peculiar twist, and the result was all that could have been wished.

With a cry of pain the dragoon fell to his knees, and then rolled over on his side on the ground.

Had he not done so his wrists would have been broken.

It was a strange spectacle, to say the least.

The redcoats stared in open-mouthed amazement.

They had not expected to see anything like this.

The idea that the youth should prove more than a match for their comrade had never entered their minds.

Dick did not stop with this, however.

He had made up his mind to teach the redcoat a lesson.

The dragoon had laughed and made light of him when he had spoken of himself and Bob as being "men," and now Dick was determined that he would prove to the fellow, and to his comrades as well, that he was entitled to be called a man.

Having brought the redcoat to the ground, Dick by a quick, skillful motion and a dexterous twist, turned the fellow over, so that he lay on the ground on his stomach. Dick had managed to bring the redcoat's arms around till they were at his back.

Dick now ran his thumb up inside the coat-sleeve on the fellow's right arm, and the four fingers of the hand up the coat-sleeve on the left arm, and gripping the stout cloth in a grip of steel, the youth held the man's arms with his left hand, in spite of all the fellow could do.

Then Dick lifted the fellow with a sudden jerk, and laid his body across his left knee.

This was done so quickly the redcoat was taken by surprise, and before he could make an effort to kick and squirm down, the youth had thrown his right leg over the top of

the redcoat's legs, binding them there, and making it impossible for their owner to get loose.

There the redcoat was, held half-doubled across Dick's knee.

The redcoats on the horses were almost stupefied with amazement at the wonderful sight.

They saw that their comrade was entirely at the mercy of the youth.

They wondered if the boy would dare do what he had threatened to do.

They were soon to find out.

Having gotten his opponent in a position where he was entirely helpless and at his mercy, Dick reached over and drew the fellow's sabre out of its scabbard.

"By Jove, he's going to do it!" gasped one of the dragoons.

And Dick meant business.

Taking the sabre by the hilt, he raised it aloft.

He looked up at the shining blade.

"Let's see," he said, coolly, "I must not make a mistake and strike him with the edge of the weapon, as I have no desire to cut the fellow in two."

A hoarse bellow of rage came up from the redcoat.

"Let—me—up!" he cried, hoarsely.

"Presently," replied Dick, calmly. "There is no hurry."

Down came the sabre—swish!

The flat side struck the redcoat, and that it hurt him was evidenced by the howl to which he gave utterance.

Swish!

Again the sabre came down with a crack, and again a howl went up from the redcoat.

"I'll—have—your—life—for—this!"

Such were the words that the man gave utterance to.

But Dick did not seem at all alarmed.

Up went the sabre again.

A moment it rested in the air.

Then, swish! down it came again.

Crack! it struck the redcoat, and again a howl of pain escaped him.

"You note that he yelled louder that time, gentlemen?" asked Dick, with a grave air. "You see, the more often a person is struck on the same portion of the body, the greater becomes the pain. It is a peculiar fact, but a fact, nevertheless, and I will prove it to you. Just listen to him this time."

Up went the sabre again.

A moment it hung suspended, then down it came with a swish.

Crack! it took the dragoon, and a fearful howl escaped

the fellow's lips, and he made a frantic and desperate effort to free himself.

"Did you take note of that, gentlemen?" asked Dick; "he howled louder that time, and you will hear even a greater yell out of him this time. Listen."

The redcoats stared at Dick in open-mouthed amazement.

The coolness and audacity of the youth almost paralyzed them.

Then, too, the manner in which he had handled Jackson was sufficient cause for wonderment.

Jackson was a man, and one of the strongest and most athletic in the company.

He was something of a bully, too, and had terrorized the others to a greater or lesser extent.

For this reason he was not given much sympathy in his present trouble.

In truth, the majority of the men were glad to see him humbled.

They felt that the lesson would do him good.

He had been needing the lesson for a long time, but none of his comrades had felt like taking it upon themselves to try to give it to him.

They were more than willing he should receive the lesson at the hands of a stranger, however.

They felt that the lesson would be more valuable on account of the fact that it had been administered by a boy.

This would completely crush the would-be bully, and put a stop to future attempts in that line.

So now not a hand was raised to prevent Dick from doing as he wished with the fellow.

Up into the air rose the sabre.

Down it came with the same familiar swish; and crack! it struck the redcoat.

And again a terrible howl went up from the fellow.

"Hear?" remarked Dick, coolly; "that was louder still, was it not?"

The captain nodded.

"I think it was," he replied, quietly.

Bob, who had stood near taking in everything, was almost tickled to death.

He was grinning all over his face.

He had never seen anything which pleased him quite to such an extent as this affair.

"I guess they won't fool with Dick again," he said to himself. "Great Guns, but he is a terror when he gets started!"

The redcoat bent over Dick's knee evidently would have acknowledged the truth of this.

Dick lifted the sabre into the air again, but held it there, suspended, while he looked up at the captain and asked:

"Is there a mantel or clock shelf in your mess-room?"

"Yes, why?" the captain asked.

"That's all right, then; he will have some place to eat off of," said Dick, and then, swish!—whack!—went the sabre and another terrible howl was extracted from the redcoat.

The redcoats laughed at Dick's remark.

They could not help it.

Before lifting the sabre for another stroke Dick paused, and asked:

"Are you willing to acknowledge that I am a man, and your master? If so, I will let you go with the punishment already administered; if not, then I shall be compelled to proceed, for I am determined to persuade you to that way of thinking, if it takes all day."

"No!" was the fierce reply; "I won't acknowledge anything of the kind, and as soon as I am free I shall kill you, you cursed young scoundrel! I'll——"

Swish!—whack!—howl!

Dick had up with the sabre and whacked the redcoat, cutting short his tirade.

"He is very stubborn," said Dick, calmly, "and stubbornness is a very unlovely trait of character. I shall have to try to take some of that out of him."

Then he raised the sabre aloft, poised it for an instant, and brought it down with a louder whack than any that had gone before, and the yell that escaped the lips of the redcoat was certainly louder and more heartrending than any of the others he had given utterance to.

"Help!" he howled, twisting his neck and looking at his comrades beseechingly; "take the young fiend off before he kills me!"

"You brought it on yourself, Jackson," replied the captain, calmly; "and besides, you can put a stop to it at any time by simply acknowledging what is obviously the truth—that the young man is not only a man, but your master as well."

"That is sensible," said Dick, approvingly; "he need not be punished any more, if he does not choose to be. All he will have to do will be to acknowledge the truth, and all men ought to be willing to do that, when it is presented to their notice."

"All right!" cried the man; "I'll acknowledge it. I'd acknowledge anything to get out of this predicament, but (in a low tone) when I do get out——"

"What will happen?" asked Dick.

"Well, you will see!" savagely.

"I don't doubt that at all," said Dick, calmly; "but be-

fore freeing you, friend Jackson, I wish to give you a piece of advice. Are you listening?"

"Go on!" fiercely.

"Very well. The advice is this: That you make no further attempt to injure me. If you do, I promise you that you will wish you had not. I have been easy with you——" a terrible groan from the redcoat and a smile from the fellow's comrades—— "I have been easy with you," continued Dick, "and I do not wish to be harder on you, but if you attack me, I shall protect myself. You threatened to spank me with your sabre; I turned the table on you, and spanked you with the sabre; now if you attack me, I shall protect myself, and I shall oppose you in kind, no matter how you come at me—so take warning, and let the matter drop."

A grunt was the only response, and then Dick with a dexterous movement, replaced the sabre in the scabbard.

Then he placed the man on his feet, and stepped back, and folding his arms, watched the fellow closely.

"Look out for him, Dick!" whispered Bob; "he's got a wicked look in his eyes."

Dick had noted this fact.

He nodded his head, but made no reply.

The eyes of all were upon the man Jackson.

No doubt the dragoons were expecting some kind of an attempt on the part of their comrade to square accounts with the youth who had handled him so severely.

They were not disappointed.

Jackson stood for a few moments looking confused and dazed, and then as his eyes fell upon Dick, a hoarse cry of rage escaped him.

Quick as a flash he drew his sabre and leaped toward Dick.

There was the look of a demon in his eyes.

That he meant to kill Dick no one who saw him for a moment doubted.

CHAPTER III

"TRICKY" JASPER.

But he stopped as suddenly as he had leaped forward.

Dick had stood with arms folded.

But his right hand rested on the butt of one of his pistols.

As the redcoat drew his sabre and leaped forward, Dick drew the pistol as quickly as a flash and extended it straight in front of him.

The muzzle of the pistol stared the dragoon in the face.

"Back!" cried Dick, in a tone of deadly determination; "if you come a step nearer I will shoot you dead!"

That was all Dick said, but all who heard him were impressed with the belief that he meant exactly what he said, and would do as he said.

They felt that if Jackson took a step more forward he would be shot down in his tracks.

And Jackson himself seemed to appreciate this fact.

He had had sufficient experience with Dick to know that the youth was not to be trifled with.

A murmur of amazement, not unmixed with admiration, went up from the dragoons.

For the present they did not wonder how it was that a country boy should have a pistol, and be so dexterous in its use.

They only thought of the fact and the act, and they could not help admiring the wonderful courage, skill and grit of the youth.

The captain of the dragoons now thought it time to interfere.

He saw that some one would very likely get hurt soon if he did not interfere.

He felt confident that the some one would be Jackson, but this did not influence him.

He would have interfered just as quickly had he thought it would be the boy who would be hurt.

He thought the entire affair had gone far enough.

Dick had furnished himself and the men with an enjoyable entertainment, and he felt friendly disposed toward him on that account.

"That will do, Jackson," he said, in a somewhat stern voice; "put up your sabre. What do you mean, anyhow? That is no way to do!"

Jackson frowned and hesitated.

He was very angry.

He was aching to get even with Dick for the manner in which the youth had handled him.

At the same time he realized that as the matter now stood, the chances for his getting even were very slim.

He realized that the chances were good that, if he attempted to push matters, he would be killed or badly wounded.

And deep down in his heart he was glad of the captain's interference.

It gave him a chance to get out of a bad hole in a graceful manner.

If the captain had not interfered he could not have retreated from the position he had taken without laying

himself open to being looked upon as a coward by his companions.

He was not really a coward.

So he would undoubtedly have tried to push the affair to a conclusion, and would have got badly hurt.

He would not give in too readily now, however.

Even that would give his comrades a chance to talk.

So he hesitated.

"But see what he has done, captain," he said; "I much——"

"You are to blame, Jackson," calmly and coldly; "you brought it upon yourself. The boy did only as was right and proper."

"I don't see it that way!" mumbled the dragoon.

"Well, I do, and so do all the rest of the men, eh fellows?"

"That's right!"

"Of course!"

"Yes, you are to blame, Jackson."

"And you ought to take your medicine without making any fuss about it."

Such were the cries of the redcoats.

"Don't put a stop to it on my account, captain," said Dick, calmly and coldly; "I am quite willing it should go on. If the gentleman thinks he hasn't had enough, I shall take pleasure in giving him still more."

"I'm not doing it on your account, my boy," was the captain's reply; "I believe, from what I have seen, that you are amply able to take care of yourself; but there is no need of Jackson carrying the affair to extremes. It has gone far enough already."

"That is for you to say," was Dick's calm reply.

"Put up your sabre, Jackson!" ordered the captain.

He was commanding now.

Jackson realized this.

He would not have dared disobey, even had he desired to do so.

And he was quite willing to obey.

He pretended not to be, however.

He made a great show of reluctance.

He hesitated, muttered and then slowly and with apparent reluctance he returned the sabre to its scabbard.

Instantly Dick returned the pistol to his belt.

"Mount!" ordered the captain.

Jackson obeyed.

Then the captain looked at Dick and Bob searchingly.

"Where are you two chaps going?" he asked.

"To New Brunswick," replied Dick.

"To New Brunswick, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you expect to do there?"

"We were thinking of joining the British army, sir."

"Ah!"

The captain looked at the youths with interest.

"How old are you?" he asked, presently.

"Eighteen."

"Both the same age, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Rather young to go in the army."

"Well, we'll be older in time," with a smile; "until then we should like to join the army and fight as best we can."

"Very well said, my boy; very well said indeed."

The captain was silent for a few moments, during which time he was looking down at the ground.

Then he looked up and surveyed the youths once more.

"My company is shy a few men," he said, slowly; "and I think I can use you."

Then he drew a note-book from his pocket.

Taking out a small bit of crayon, he wrote a few words on a page of the book.

Tearing the leaf out, he handed it to Dick.

"When you get to New Brunswick," he said, "ask for the quarters occupied by Captain Seymour's company of dragoons. When you have found the quarters, ask for Jasper. Give this to Jasper. He will take care of you till we get back. Then I will see that you are fitted out with uniforms and a horse apiece."

"Thank you, Captain Seymour," said Dick.

"That's all right; I think you will make first-rate soldiers. I shall give you the opportunity, anyway."

Then he cried, "Attention! Forward!" and the dragoons rode away at a gallop.

Dick and Bob looked after the redcoats, and then looked at each other.

"Say, this rather beats anything I've seen lately, Dick," grinned Bob. "My, but didn't you baste that redcoat good, though!"

"I had to do it, Bob."

"Of course you did; or he would have done the same thing to you. Oh, it was great! I never expected to see such a spectacle."

"Neither did they, I guess, Bob," with a nod in the direction of the redcoats.

"You are right; it was a surprise to all of them—and to the fellow Jackson, most of all. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bob laughed heartily.

Dick could not help smiling.

"Mr. Jackson could see nothing to laugh at in that affair, Bob," he said, gravely.

"No, I suppose not. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, let's be going, Bob," said Dick.

"Straight into New Brunswick, Dick?"

Bob stopped laughing, and looked sober.

"Straight into New Brunswick, Bob!"

"Right into the lion's den!"

"Yes—right into the lion's mouth!"

"Say, we'll get all chewed up, don't you think?"

"Perhaps; perhaps not."

"We've got to take our chances, eh?"

"Yes."

"All right; I can stand it if you can. One thing, I ought to give us a chance to have a real lively time."

"There is no doubt regarding that, Bob," with a smile

Then the two set out up the road.

They reached New Brunswick after a walk of half an hour.

They entered the town, and were challenged at the edge of the village by a sentry.

They told him they were new recruits for Captain Seymour's company of dragoons, and asked to be directed to the quarters occupied by the company.

"Going to join us, eh?" the sentinel asked, eyeing the youths with interest.

"Yes."

"Hm! If you know when you're well off, you'll stay out."

"Why so?"

Dick wished to pump the fellow a bit.

"Why so?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's simple enough. If you join the army you will not dare say your soul is your own. You will have to do as your superior officers say, will have to be a mere machine—a fighting machine, which may at any moment be put out of the affair forever by a bullet of a rebel. Better stay out."

The youths looked at the redcoat with interest.

He was a handsome young fellow of not more than twenty-three or twenty-four years.

He was a bright fellow, undoubtedly, and a good-hearted one, else he would not have advised them to stay out.

"Don't you like it?" asked Bob.

"I?"

"Yes."

The soldier shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I'd rather be at home with my parents and sweetheart!" with a wistful smile.

"You are a good ways away from them, that's a fact," said Dick.

"Yes; well, I will tell you where to go to find the quarters occupied by Captain Seymour's company, if you wish me to. I'd advise you to think again before going there, though."

"I guess we'll risk it," said Dick.

"Very well; but I think you'll regret it."

Then the good-hearted redcoat directed the youths how to go to reach the place they were headed for.

They thanked him, and with a "good-by," went on.

"Say, that's a pretty decent sort of fellow, Dick," said Bob, as they walked on.

"Yes; there are lots of such fellows in the British ranks, Bob. Not all of them are cruel, bloodthirsty fellows."

"No; I suppose not."

Presently they reached the house occupied by the company of dragoons.

They asked for Jasper, and were directed to him by the man who opened the door.

Dick gave Jasper the note which Captain Seymour had written.

Jasper read it, and then told the youths to follow him.

He led the way upstairs to the third story.

They made their way along a long hall, and at the extreme end of the hall Jasper opened the door of a room.

"This room is vacant. You may occupy it."

"Thank you," said Dick, and he entered the room, followed by Bob.

Jasper lingered, and followed them into the room.

He made a pretense of dusting, and arranging various articles, but Dick, who was watching the fellow without seeming to do so, was convinced that Jasper was studying them.

"He's a deep one," the youth thought; "he is as sharp as a tack. We shall have to look out for him."

"So you are going to join the British army, eh?" remarked Jasper, presently.

"Yes," replied Dick, briefly.

"Where are you from?"

"From out in the country a ways."

"Hum! Sons of Tories, I suppose?"

"Yes."

Dick was bound to be as non-committal as possible.

"You wish to fight for the king, do you?"

"Certainly," said Dick; "all loyal people ought to wish to fight for him, don't you think?"

"Of course I think so; but then, you see, I'm an Englishman."

"Well, we are descended from Englishmen," said Dick.

"True."

Then Jasper got ready to go.

"You are free to go where you like in the house," he said; "of course you won't want to stay right here in the room all the time."

"Oh, no, of course not. Thank you."

Jasper took his leave then, and when sure he was out of hearing, Dick looked at Bob, and said:

"I don't fancy that fellow, old man."

"Nor I, Dick. He seems too ferret-like to suit me."

"You are right; he seemed to want to know it all."

"We'll have to look out, Dick. We may get into trouble here before we know it."

"Right, old man."

They remained in the room till nearly noon, and then they heard footsteps coming along the hallway.

There came a knock at their door as the footsteps ceased in front of it.

"Come in!" called Dick.

The door opened and Captain Seymour stepped into the room.

"Well, you got here all right, I see," he remarked.

"Yes," replied Dick; "we had no trouble in finding our way here."

"Glad of that. Well, you still wish to join my company?"

"Oh, yes."

"Very good; I will see to it that your names are enrolled, and then to-morrow you will be given uniforms."

"Thank you," said Dick.

"Dinner is ready; will you go down with me?"

"We shall be pleased to do so," replied Dick.

The captain led the way, and they went down to a large room, where several long-tables stood.

Jasper hastened to meet them, and led the way to a table at which a number of soldiers were already seated.

There was a peculiar look on Jasper's face as he did this.

It seemed as though there was malicious delight thereon, and events proved that this was the case, for he led Dick and Bob to the table and sat them down so that as Dick looked up, after getting seated, he found himself face to face with Captain Parks, an officer who knew him well, and was aware that he was a patriot spy.

CHAPTER IV.

PRISONERS!

Captain Parks smiled as he saw the look on Dick's face. Then he extended his hand, and said:

"How are you, Dick? Glad to see you!"

Dick was taken aback.

He felt for once in his life he had been caught in a trap from which there was no escape.

A quick glance around showed him the folly of trying to escape.

There were nearly a hundred men in the room, and the eyes of the majority were upon him.

He realized that they understood the situation and knew who he was.

He felt that this had been planned.

He wondered how it was discovered that he was Dick Slater, the boy spy.

Then the thought flashed into his mind:

Jasper!

Without a doubt Jasper had seen him some time when he was among the British, and had recognized him.

He had told Captain Seymour, and he had entered into the affair with zest, without a doubt.

He had come up to their room and conducted them down to the dining-room personally, on purpose so as to be sure nothing would go wrong with the little drama.

And here they were, almost a hundred of them, watching the two youths, and enjoying their discomfiture.

All this went through Dick's mind like a flash.

Bob had never seen Captain Parks, so was in blissful ignorance of the fact that they had been found out.

He did not realize that a thrilling drama in real life was being played right before his eyes.

He sat there, calm and unconcerned, though he did look a bit surprised when Captain Parks stuck out his hand and offered to shake hands with his companion.

Dick made up his mind to fool the redcoats a bit.

They were all primed to have a lot of fun at his expense.

They expected, of course, that he would show excitement, and might even try to escape, when they could make a prisoner of him, and laugh at him more than ever.

So Dick, in pursuance of his resolve, accepted the captain's hand and shook it heartily.

"How are you, Captain Parks?" he remarked, quietly and calmly. "I'm glad to see you. This is my friend, Bob Estabrook."

"Glad to make the acquaintance of your friend," said the captain, offering Bob his hand, and deciding, upon the impulse of the moment, to let the play go on for a while. "Is he as noted as yourself, Dick?"

"Well, he has not done quite so much in a certain line as I have been credited with doing," was Dick's cool and calm reply; "but he is not behind me in ability by any means,

and if I do say it, who perhaps should not, I think that the British army will be the gainer by having us join it."

The redcoats, even including Captain Parks, stared at the youth in open-mouthed amazement.

His remarkable coolness was a source of wonderment to them.

They could not understand it.

Dick's words and manner would seem to indicate that he really intended joining the British army in good faith.

Could it be possible? they asked themselves.

The majority of those present had heard of Dick Slater the patriot boy spy.

They were aware that he had done more to aid in the defeat of the British forces, through obtaining information and taking it to General Washington, than a whole regiment could have done.

They understood that he was intensely patriotic.

Could it be possible that he was sincere, and that he and his companion intended to join the British army, and fight against the patriots?

They could hardly believe it.

Yet the youth's manner and words would seem to indicate this.

It was plain to be seen that even Captain Parks was puzzled.

He looked at Dick searchingly.

"You don't really mean that you would join the British army, Dick?" he asked.

Dick was a remarkably shrewd youth.

He was also a remarkably bold one, when it was necessary so to be.

He saw a chance—a faint one, true, but a chance, nevertheless—to get out of the hole into which he and Bob had fallen, by pursuing the bold course he had taken so far, and he made up his mind to make it win, if possible.

"Of course I mean it," he said, looking the captain full in the eyes; "you don't suppose I would venture in here in broad daylight, as we have done, unless I did mean it, do you? Why, I knew there would be some one here who would recognize me."

Bob began to have an inkling of the truth now.

He realized that Dick had been recognized, and that they were in a tight place.

But, like Dick, he was a brave youth, and he did not let on that he was alarmed.

He took pattern after his friend, and was as cool, in appearance, as any one could be.

Captain Seymour sat down beside Captain Parks now and entered into the conversation.

"Did you really intend to join the British army, in good faith?" he asked.

"Why, of course!" replied Dick.

It was evident that the redcoats were puzzled.

The majority were disappointed, too.

They had confidently expected to have some sport, and were they had been cheated out of it.

They felt hurt.

Captains Parks and Seymour were puzzled.

This was plain to be seen.

They were at a loss to know what to do.

They asked Dick and Bob a great many questions as the meal progressed, hoping, no doubt, that the youths would betray themselves in some way.

The youths were very careful, however, and stuck stoutly to their declarations that they wished to join the British army that the two men were completely baffled.

When the meal ended the two captains withdrew to one corner of the room and held a conversation in low tones.

Dick and Bob saw that they were watched, and that it would do no good to attempt to try to make their escape.

So they stood quietly at one side of the room and waited.

Finally Captain Parks approached the youths.

"You may be sincere in what you say, Slater," he said, "and you may have intended to join the British army in good faith; but we do not feel like taking chances on it. You have been altogether too active against us—have done us too much damage. You have been a veritable thorn in our flesh, and Captain Seymour and I have decided that the least we can do is to hold you prisoners until we can send word to General Howe and hear from him in regard to the matter. I know that he offered a reward of a hundred pounds for your capture, and I think it best to see what he says about you before giving you a chance as king's soldiers."

"Very well," said Dick; "I guess you could not well do otherwise."

"You are right; we could not."

Then Captain Seymour called Jasper and whispered something in the fellow's ear.

He nodded and smiled, and hastened out of the room.

He returned a few minutes later, bringing some stout cords.

"Tie their hands together behind their backs!" ordered Captain Seymour, and Jasper proceeded to do so.

The fellow smiled in the youth's faces in a triumphant manner as he did this, and they felt as though they would like to have given him a good kicking.

They did not let on that they noticed his behavior, however.

And doubtless this disappointed him worse than if they had shown the anger which they felt toward him.

When their arms had been bound in a secure manner they were led off by four redcoats, Jasper leading the way, and presently they came to a dark, gloomy-looking building.

"This is the prison," vouchsafed Jasper; "pleasant place—very!"

He intended to be 'sarcastic and humorous, but the youths did not even smile.

In fact, they paid no attention to him or his words.

They had made up their minds to ignore Jasper, and they made a very good success of it.

They were taken into the building, conducted up a flight of stairs, along a hallway, and ushered into a cell.

It was a small room, dark, gloomy, unpleasant in appearance.

There was scarcely any furniture, a stool, a small table, a couple of cots being the sum total.

"There!" said Jasper; "I guess you will be comfortable here for a month or two."

"Oh, no doubt of it," said Dick. "We'll try and worry along somehow."

"That is the way to do—make the best of it," said Jasper, with a chuckle.

"That is the way we always do," was the quiet reply.

Then Jasper and the four soldiers withdrew, and the door was shut with a clang, and locked upon the outside.

The youths sat down upon the cots and looked at each other for a few moments without speaking.

"Well," said Dick, presently, "it looks as though we were in for it, Bob."

Bob nodded.

"It looks so, old man," he replied; "so that captain knew you, did he?"

"Yes; I have met him several times."

"How long do you think we will have to stay in here, Dick?"

"Well, it is hard saying; a week or so, perhaps; but then we will probably only get into worse trouble."

"You think so?"

"Yes; then we will doubtless be taken to New York, to where General Howe is. He offered a reward for my capture, so you may know that he wanted me pretty badly."

"Yes, I know that."

The youths were silent for a few minutes, each being busy with his thoughts, and then Bob looked up.

"Can we not escape, Dick?" he asked.

"Hard telling, Bob. We will certainly escape, if such a thing is possible, though."

"Good! That's the way to talk, Dick! We must escape."

A mocking laugh came from the other side of the door.

The youths looked at each other.

The same thought was in the mind of each.

It was Jasper.

He had remained behind at the door, and had been listening to their conversation.

CHAPTER V.

A SHARP TRICK.

"You infamous scoundrel!" cried Dick; "if ever I get the chance I shall make it my especial business to settle with you for all this!"

Another mocking laugh was the reply.

Then they heard footsteps receding along the hall.

"He is gone now, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes; but he heard what we said."

"So he did."

"And knows we were not sincere in wishing to join the British army."

"Yes, he knows that now."

"There will be no use for us to try to fool Captain Parks and the rest. They will know we are not sincere, and would laugh at us."

"Right, Dick; we will have to escape."

"We must escape, Bob."

"But that is going to be a difficult thing to accomplish, old man."

"Yes; but we will have to accomplish it in some way."

It looked dark for the youths, however.

They were in a stout room in a strong building, and their hands were tied together behind their backs.

How, then, were they to escape?

They would have to give the matter thought.

It was obvious, however, that the first thing to do was to get their hands free.

So they went to work to try to accomplish this.

Jasper had done his work well.

Doubtless it was not the first time he had done something of the kind.

The youths were persevering, however, and worked away like beavers.

At last an exclamation of satisfaction escaped Dick.

"I am getting the knots loosened, Bob," he said.

"Good!" replied Bob; "I don't seem to be able to get mine started to loosening at all."

Dick worked with renewed vigor.

At last he succeeded.

The knots came unfastened, under the manipulation of his fingers, and his arms were free.

This had been a remarkable feat, as he could only reach the knots with the tip-ends of his fingers.

Perseverance will accomplish wonders, however.

It took him only a few moments to free Bob's arms.

Then they stretched their arms out and drew a long breath of relief.

"I feel better," said Bob.

"And I, Bob."

"Our hands are free, but our bodies are not."

"No, that is yet to be accomplished."

"And it is going to be the most difficult task."

"Yes, far more difficult."

"Have you any plan?"

Dick was silent a few moments, and then said:

"I'll tell you, Bob. I have no plan in detail. What I have thought of, however, is this: That when the man comes to bring us our suppers, as some one will do, we must be able to overpower him, make him a prisoner here in our places, and then escape. What do you think?"

"It is worth trying, anyway, Dick."

"So I think. Well, we will hide these ropes so that he won't be seen when the fellow comes."

"But he will see that our hands are free, Dick."

"We must not let him see that such is the case, Bob. We must be sitting on our cots, with our hands behind our backs, see?"

"I see."

"And then we must seize our opportunity and leap upon him and make him a prisoner."

"I understand; that's a good plan, and ought to succeed."

"Yes, in so far as making a prisoner of the man is concerned. Two of us ought to be more than a match for him, especially when we take him by surprise. The real difficulties will come after that."

"When we are trying to get out, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, anything will be better than sitting quietly here and submitting to our fate."

"So it will, Bob."

"We won't tamely submit to anything."

"Not a bit of it."

The youths talked quite a good deal, but the afternoon wore away very slowly for all that.

It seemed as though it would never pass.

As evening drew on, the youths became slightly uneasy.

They feared the man might come to their cell with their food before it was dark outside.

They did not wish him to do this.

They wanted that it should be dark before he came, so that they could make him a prisoner, and then make an immediate attempt at escaping.

If he should come while it was yet light they would not dare try to escape from the building, and it would be dangerous to delay, as the jailer would come to see what was keeping the man who had brought the food.

But their fears proved groundless.

It grew dark out of doors before the man came.

This suited the two brave "Liberty Boys" exactly.

It would enable them to make a bold bid for their liberty.

When at last they heard the footsteps of the man coming along the hall they were ready to receive the fellow.

They sat down upon the cots and put their hands behind them.

There was a small table at the opposite side of the room from the one on which were the cots.

The youths figured that the man would enter the room, step across to where the table was and place the food on the table.

In doing this his back would be partially toward them.

Then would be their opportunity.

They would leap upon him at that moment.

They felt sure they could make him a prisoner without much trouble.

Their only fear was that he might cry out and bring others to his assistance.

To prevent this it was decided that Dick should grasp the man by the throat with both hands and choke him so hard that he would be unable to cry out, while Bob was to seize the fellow's wrists and hold him until he was choked into submission.

The plan seemed to promise well.

And they were the boys to make it work out, too.

The footsteps ceased when they reached the door of the room the youths were in.

The sound of a key rattling in the lock was heard.

The youths sat there on the cots silent and motionless, but with every nerve and muscle tense and drawn.

They were ready for the work before them.

The door swung slowly inward, and a man appeared.

He looked and saw the youths sitting on the cots, with

their hands behind them, and thought, of course, that they were bound.

There was no need for caution, he thought; the prisoners could not harm him.

He walked across to where the table stood, at the farther side of the room.

His back was partially toward the prisoners.

He did not have his eyes on them at all.

Fatal error!

Just as he placed the tray on the table he felt his throat gripped in fingers of steel.

At the same instant his wrists were grasped by strong hands.

He realized it all when it was too late.

He had been neatly fooled by the prisoners.

He tried to cry out.

He could not.

The steel-like fingers encompassing his throat made it impossible for him to do so.

He struggled, and tried to wrench his wrists free from the grasp holding them.

He could not do this, either.

He was powerless in the hands of the two strong youths.

Presently his knees gave way beneath him, and he sank to the floor unconscious.

Dick at once removed the pressure from the man's throat.

He had no desire to kill him.

They lifted the fellow and laid him on one of the cots.

Then they tied his hands together behind his back.

Next they gagged him.

They did not wish that he should cry out, should he regain consciousness soon.

"Now to see if we can get out of this place!" murmured Dick.

"I hope we may be able to do so," said Bob.

"Come!" said Dick.

They were so eager to escape that they did not stop to eat the food which had been brought.

Time was too precious.

The jailer would wonder what was keeping the man who had brought the food, and would come to see about it.

Dick led the way out of the room into the hall.

They looked down the hall.

There was no one in sight.

Dick closed the door and locked it.

Then he placed the key in his pocket.

"Come on, Bob," he whispered.

Dick led the way along the hall.

Bob kept close behind him.

They soon reached the end of the hall.

A stairway led downward.

They knew it would be dangerous to venture down.

They must do it, however.

If they were to escape they must take chances.

They stole down the stairs.

They were halfway down when they saw a door open and a man stepped into the square hall room at the foot of the stairs.

It was the jailer.

The youths stopped instantly.

They crouched down by the stair railing, endeavoring to screen themselves behind it.

Had the jailer looked up he could not have helped seeing them.

But he did not look.

Some one spoke to him from within the room he had just come out of, and he turned back to answer.

The youths seized the opportunity, and ran lightly and swiftly back up the stairs to the landing above.

They paused here and looked at each other.

"It is going to be impossible to get out in that direction, Bob," whispered Dick.

"It looks that way, Dick."

The youths hardly knew what to do.

There were no windows along the hallway.

They studied the situation for a few moments.

Then Dick whispered to Bob:

"Follow me!"

They made their way back along the hall to the cell which they had just left.

They entered.

The man whom they had left there had not yet regained consciousness.

Dick went to the window and opened it.

There were iron bars up outside.

The youth took hold of the rods, one after another, and tested their strength.

He found one that he could spring somewhat with his hands.

The bars were about eight inches apart; if they could bend one to one side a few inches, they could crawl through.

If they could get through between the bars they would risk the drop to the ground.

True, it would be quite a drop, but they were not afraid.

The trouble was to be able to get through between the bars.

Dick placed the tray on which was the food on the floor.

Then he seized the table, and, turning it down on the

floor, took hold of one leg, and after a few jerks managed to wrench the leg loose.

Then he attacked the iron bars.

He directed his attention to the one which had given slightly under the pressure of his hands.

By using the table leg as a lever to pry with, Dick was enabled to bend the iron bar quite considerably without a great deal of trouble.

While they were working away, Bob having come to his assistance, the prisoner opened his eyes.

He saw what the youths were doing, and it all came back to him like a flash.

He began struggling with his bonds, but could do nothing.

The youths had tied his hands very securely.

"It's pretty nearly large enough space for the passage of our bodies, Bob," said Dick; "give it another wrench."

Just then footsteps were heard coming along the hallway.

Dick leaped lightly to the door and closed it.

Then he locked it.

Then he came back, and he and Bob began working with all their might.

There came the sound of some one trying to open the door.

Then a voice was heard.

"Hi, there, August!" it said.

Of course August did not reply, being gagged.

It was easy to see that he would like to have been able to reply, however.

The look in his eyes told that.

He was gagged, though, and all he could do was to look.

The youths worked like beavers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ESCAPE.

"Hi, there, August!" came the cry again.

This time the voice was angry-sounding and authoritative.

There was no reply from August, and the jailer became very angry.

He pounded on the door.

"What's the matter in there? Open the door! Why is it locked?"

Still there was no reply, and it was evident that the jailer suspected that something was wrong, for the youths

heard his footsteps as he hurried away down the length of the hall.

"He has gone for another key to open the door," said Dick; "we must get out of here before he gets back."

"I believe we can get through there now, Dick," said Bob, eagerly.

"Think so?"

"Yes; let me try it."

"All right; go ahead, and if you can get through, I can. My body is not larger than yours."

"No, I guess not."

Bob climbed up, and, poking his feet through the opening, he began working his way through.

It was a tight squeeze with his body, but he managed to get through.

At this instant the footsteps of the jailer coming back were heard outside, and Dick said:

"The jailer is coming back! Drop, and I will follow."

"All right; here goes!" Then Bob let go his hold, he having let himself down as far as he could go and hang by his hands, and he disappeared from sight.

Dick leaped up, and stuck his feet out through the opening at the instant he heard the rattle of the key in the lock of the door.

He forced himself through the opening very quickly, and just as he was letting himself down on the outside of the window, the door of the room opened, and three men leaped into the room.

They saw Dick, and a cry of rage escaped them.

They leaped forward, and tried to seize Dick's wrists.

He was too quick for them, however.

He let go his hold of the iron bars and dropped.

Cries of disappointment and anger escaped the three men.

Dick had not even glanced down to see where he would alight.

He felt confident that the shock would not seriously injure him.

Had there been much danger in dropping Bob would have warned him.

He struck the ground and fell, but was up again in a flash.

"Come on!" said Bob, in a low, excited voice.

Crack!

A bullet came whistling down from above.

It just missed Dick.

One of the men had fired down from the window.

"A close shave!" murmured Dick.

And he and Bob bounded away.

Crack!

The man had fired again.

The bullet flew wide of the mark, however.

"They would just as soon kill us as not, I guess," murmured Bob.

"It looks that way," agreed Dick.

The youths now felt that they were in a tight place.

They were within the British lines.

They were escaping prisoners.

Their escape would become known far and wide within a very few minutes.

Every redcoat in the British army would be on the lookout for them.

The youths ran with all their might.

They headed northward.

Dick's idea in doing this was that the redcoats would think that they would naturally try to go in the direction of the patriot army at Middlebrook.

Had it not been dark, and quite dark at that, the youths would have been captured very quickly.

As it was, by running through the side streets, and back alleys, they were enabled to avoid being seen by the redcoats.

They kept running, and as they heard the sounds of the redcoats hurrying here and there, and calling to one another, the youths felt that their chances for escaping were indeed slim.

They would not give up without a struggle, however, and they buckled down to the work with great energy.

Suddenly, as they leaped out of a dark alley to cross a street but little better lighted, they ran upon a little squad of the redcoats.

There were perhaps a dozen of the fellows.

The youths did not stop, or try to turn aside and dodge the redcoats.

Instead, they increased their pace, if possible, and went right through the crowd.

They scattered the redcoats in every direction, and upset three or four of them.

The redcoats uttered cries and curses.

"Shoot them!" howled one; "don't let them escape!"

He was one of the fellows who had been knocked down, and was very angry.

Dick and Bob heard his words.

They knew that the redcoats would fire a volley after them.

In the darkness the fellows could not see to take aim, however.

If they shot straight, it would be altogether an accident.

Crack!

The bullets whistled past the fugitives.

One cut through Dick's coat-sleeve, barely breaking the skin.

"Another close call!" he murmured; "well, if they don't come any closer, I shall be well satisfied."

"Are you hit, old man?" asked Bob, anxiously.

"A mere scratch on the arm, Bob."

Soon they were at the next street.

They turned down it.

They had gone not more than halfway down it to the next street before they saw a body of redcoats come around the corner, and turn in their direction.

"What'll we do, Dick?" panted Bob.

"We'll go over this fence!" replied Dick, and he suited the action to the word.

It was darker near the middle of the block, and the redcoats could not see the youths.

Bob jumped the fence close after Dick.

It happened that there were some hogs in this back yard, and Bob alighted squarely upon a two-hundred-pound porker.

The animal was lying down and dreaming, doubtless, of a porcine paradise where corn was to be had six times a day, when Bob came down upon it, and to be aroused from its sleep in this rude fashion was anything but pleasing, and the animal leaped to its feet with a shrill squeal of protest and with such suddenness as to upset Bob, and deposit him on his back on the ground. The several other porkers, aroused by the squeal of their fellow, leaped up and went chasing wildly around. They ran over Bob and trampled upon him in a very free and unrestricted manner before he could get to his feet again.

The redcoats heard the noise made by the hogs, and were hastening to the scene as rapidly as possible.

"Come!" said Dick, in a low, excited voice; "we must get away from here in a hurry!"

Then he seized hold of Bob and assisted him to his feet.

Bob was angry, and gave one of the hogs a kick that forced another ear-splitting shriek from the animal, and then they ran on across the yard as fast as possible.

The redcoats had arrived at the back yard fence now.

They were greatly excited.

They were talking and calling out to one another.

Evidently they thought they had run the fugitives to earth.

Dick and Bob leaped over a division fence into another yard.

They ran across this yard, and leaped still another fence.

The house did not quite cover the width of the lot.

There was a path alongside the house a few feet wide.

The youths ran out through this opening, and as they did so they heard the redcoats coming.

It was becoming rather warm.

The youths emerged upon what seemed to be the main street.

People were to be seen in every direction.

"This will never do, Bob!" said Dick; "we will be captured in a jiffy, if we aren't careful."

"What shall we do, Dick?"

For answer Dick leaped up the steps leading to a house and knocked on the door.

Presently the door opened, and Dick brushed past the servant, a colored fellow, followed by Bob.

"Close the door and fasten it!" ordered Dick, pointing a pistol at the darky's head.

"Yes, massa!" said the negro; "doan' shoot, massa!"

The darky was frightened almost to death.

He closed the door and locked it.

As he did so a thunderous knock came upon it.

The redcoats had seen Dick and Bob enter the house.

"Don't offer to open that door, upon peril of your life!" said Dick, in a low, threatening tone.

"No, massa; ob co'se not, massa."

The negro rolled his eyes.

He trembled so his teeth rattled.

"Let them thump on the door till they get tired," said Dick. "Now, I'll tell you what I want you to do. I want you to conduct us through the house to the rear door, and show us the way out; do you understand?"

"Yes, massa; come dis way, massa."

The negro led the way back along the hall, into a large room, through it, and into the kitchen, where a colored woman, evidently the cook, rolled her eyes at the youths and then opened the rear door, which opened out upon the back yard.

"Now, be as slow in opening that front door as you possibly can be," ordered Dick, "and tell just as little as you can. Do you understand?"

"Yes, massa! Shuah, massa!"

The darky was so frightened that Dick felt sure he would wait some little time before venturing near the front door.

"Come, Bob!" he said; and they darted out into the yard.

"Say, this is a chase and a half, Dick," said Bob.

"You are right, old man; and it isn't ended yet."

"No, I guess it isn't."

The two ran across the back yard, leaped over the fence and ran down the alley.

The attention of the majority of the redcoats in the immediate neighborhood had been attracted to the street where they had been seen to enter the house.

When they reached the next street, they paused and looked up and down the street before starting to cross it.

They were learning wisdom.

They had found that it did not pay to be in too big a hurry, at times, at least.

They saw some men down the street a ways, but decided to risk crossing.

They leaped forward and ran across as fast as they could.

One of the men in question happened to look around just in time to see the two youths crossing the street.

He could not see plainly, but he jumped to the conclusion at once that they were the fugitives, and he uttered a shout and came racing up the street.

The others followed him.

"That is bad!" said Dick; "we will have to run our best once more."

They did so.

The redcoats reached the alley and came running up it after the youths.

The youths were beginning to be on their mettle now, however.

They were determined that they would escape.

So they put on an extra burst of speed.

They ran as they had not run before.

They left the redcoats behind quite rapidly.

They realized something which gave them a thrill of pleasure.

They were drawing near the outskirts of the town.

If they could get outside the line of the British they felt that they would be able to escape.

This they succeeded in doing.

They reached the limits of the town and got out into the country.

The redcoats had been left quite a ways behind.

Outside of the town, where there were no lights shining from the houses, it was quite dark, and the youths felt that they could easily evade their pursuers.

They entered a field and ran across it.

When they came to another road on the other side of the field, they could hear nothing of their pursuers.

"I guess we are all right now, Dick," said Bob, in a tone of relief.

"I think so, Bob."

"Which way, Dick?—back to Middlebrook?"

"Without having learned anything regarding the intentions of the British, Bob? I guess not!"

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I'm going to go on to New York."

"Go on to New York!" exclaimed Bob.

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOUTHS FIND FRIENDS.

"Yes," replied Dick.

His air and tone were cool.

"We will jump from the frying-pan into the fire, eh?" said Bob, in a somewhat sober tone.

"Perhaps so, Bob."

"What do you expect to learn in New York, Dick?"

"I can't say. We may learn much, we may learn little. One thing is sure, I am not going back to the commander-in-chief empty-handed."

Dick was determined.

He had been sent into the British lines many times as a spy, and never yet had he returned without having gained information which was of great benefit to General Washington and the great cause.

"That's right, Dick," agreed Bob; "we don't want to go back without having gained some information that will be of value."

"You have the idea, old man. It would not do to go back.

"I haven't any wish to do so, Dick; only I was surprised when you said we would go to New York."

"I understand, Bob. Well, let's be moving."

They started up the road.

"Are we going to walk to New York, Dick?" asked Bob, presently.

"I don't know; I hope not."

"How will we help ourselves?"

"I intend trying to hire horses at the first farm-house we come to."

"That's a good scheme, Dick."

The two walked onward.

Half a mile farther on they came to a house.

A faint streak of light could be seen shining through a crack in the door.

"I guess they are up yet," said Dick; "we'll soon see."

The youths walked boldly up to the front door.

Dick knocked.

There was no reply at first.

Dick knocked again.

Footsteps were heard this time.

Then a voice asked:

"Who is there?"

The voice was that of a woman.

The voice was shaky and trembling.

The owner was frightened.

"We are a couple of boys, madam," replied Dick; "we wish to ask a few questions, that is all. We mean you no harm."

The youths heard the sound of low voices within.

Then there was a fumbling noise as the bar was lifted down.

Then the door opened.

A woman stood there looking at the youths in a frightened manner.

She held a candle in her hand, and the youths could see her face quite distinctly.

She was perhaps forty years of age, and quite a good-looking woman, though pale now, as the result of her fear.

Behind her and looking past her was a beautiful girl of perhaps seventeen years.

She was evidently the daughter of the woman.

A boy of perhaps eight years stood beside her.

He seemed to be the only "man" about the house.

The woman seemed considerably relieved as soon as she got a good look at the youths.

She could see that they were young, handsome and manly-looking, and she evidently made up her mind that they were not the kind to injure defenseless women.

Dick and Bob bowed.

"You need have no fears, ladies," said Dick, pleasantly.

"We have mothers and sisters of our own, and know, I think, how to treat the mothers and sisters of other people."

The woman was reassured at once.

"Will you come in?" she asked, pleasantly; "there are so many of those dreadful British sol——"

She stopped suddenly, and looked at the youths quickly, to see how they took what she had said.

She started to say something about the British soldiers, and it was not of a complimentary nature.

Dick and Bob both smiled.

"Go on, lady," said Dick; "you won't hurt our feelings. We are indeed glad to hear that you are not in sympathy with the British."

"Then you are not——"

"British or Tories? No, lady; quite the opposite."

A pleased look appeared on the woman's face.

"Come in! Come in!" she said.

The youths obeyed, and the woman closed the door.

"So you are patriots?" remarked Dick, looking at the woman and then at the daughter.

"Yes, sir. My husband is in the ranks of the patriot army."

The woman pointed to stools, and the youths sat down.

"Your husband is in the army?" remarked Dick; "what is his name? Perhaps we know him, as we are patriot soldiers."

"His name is McGrew, sir—Jack McGrew."

Dick and Bob started, and looked at each other.

They knew Jack McGrew very well.

"You know him!" cried the woman, eagerly; "I can see it in your faces!"

The youths nodded.

"Yes, indeed; we know him, Mrs. McGrew. Your husband is a good man and a brave soldier."

"Ah, yes; he is a good man, indeed he is! and we have so far heard nothing to his discredit as a soldier."

"And you never will, Mrs. McGrew!" declared Dick warmly.

The woman looked at the youths eagerly, and asked:

"What are your names, young gentlemen? It will be a pleasure to know you, who know my husband."

"My name is Dick Slater," replied Dick; "and this is my friend and almost brother, Bob Estabrook."

The woman started, while the girl gave utterance to an exclamation.

"Oh, mamma!" the girl cried; "this is the young man my father was telling us about when he was here three weeks ago!"

"So it is!" her mother agreed.

Then she extended her hand.

"I wish to shake hands with one who is as brave, noble and true-hearted as yourself," she said. "My husband told us about the wonderful exploits of yourself as a spy, and of the company of 'Liberty Boys.'"

Dick blushed like a girl.

"I am afraid your husband has praised me more than I deserve," he said.

"I don't think so," the woman said.

"And you are right, Mrs. McGrew," said Bob; "Dick is a wonder, and has done more for the good of the cause of liberty than any entire regiment in the patriot army."

"I am sure of it," the woman said.

The girl stepped forward and extended her hand.

She was blushing, and looked at Dick shyly.

"I want to shake hands with you, too, Mr. Slater-Dick!" she said; "papa talked of you so much that I feel as if I were acquainted with you."

Dick blushed still more, as he took the hand of the beautiful girl.

"Now shake hands with me," said Bob in his offhand

way, a good-natured grin on his face. "I haven't done half so much as has Dick, but I'm his right-hand man, as a rule, and I think I am entitled to some consideration."

"Bob has done a great deal more than you would think, to hear him tell it," said Dick, earnestly.

The woman and her daughter shook hands with Bob, and when the boy, Master Jack, Jr., came up and shook hands with the youths.

"Now, Mrs. McGrew, if you could give us a bite to eat," said Dick, "we would be all right. We have had no supper, and have had quite a trying and exciting time of it for an hour or so past, and are tired and hungry."

"Indeed you shall have something to eat!" exclaimed the woman, and she and her daughter—Lizzie, the girl's name was—went to work getting supper at once.

Dick protested that they did not want a regular supper, simply a little cold food, as bread and meat, but Mrs. McGrew would not listen to this.

"You are hungry, and must have something to eat," she said, and knowing that the youths were hungry, she hastened matters as much as she possibly could.

Supper was ready and on the table in an incredibly short space of time.

"Now sit up and eat," said Mrs. McGrew.

The youths did so, and made such a hearty meal that the woman was delighted.

"There! That is the best meal I have eaten since the last time I was home to visit my mother and sister," said Dick.

"It is the same with me," said Bob.

"I am glad you liked it," said Mrs. McGrew, and then she asked Dick and Bob regarding their parents.

When Dick told her of how his father had been murdered, nearly a year before, by Tories, tears came to the good woman's eyes.

"That was terrible, Dick!" she said, sympathetically.

"Yes, indeed," said Dick; "it was very, very hard on mother."

"I know it was, Dick. How I wish I was a neighbor of your mother, so I could go in and comfort her!"

The youths remained there nearly an hour longer, and when Dick asked Mrs. McGrew if there were any horses on the place.

"Yes; there are four in the stable," was the reply; "they are doing no one any good, and if you need horses you are welcome to take two—or all four of them, if you wish."

"We are on our way to New York," Dick explained. "It is a good way to walk, and if we may be allowed to have the use of two of the horses, it will be a very great help indeed."

"You are welcome to the use of the horses!" said Mrs. McGrew. "Indeed, we shall feel proud to know we have been able to do something to aid those who are working for the benefit of the great cause."

"The two are all we need; and we will come back this way, and return them."

"It would be all right, even if you failed to return them," said the patriotic woman.

"We will go and get the horses ready," said Dick.

Then he and Bob left the house and went to the stable.

They went into the stable, and although it was quite dark they managed to find bridles and saddles.

As they were familiar with handling such things, they had no particular trouble in getting the bridles and saddles on the horses.

Of course they had to select the two horses by guess, but as they did not expect to have to race for their lives, they were not particular as to whether they got the two best horses or not.

When they had finished bridling and saddling the horses they started to lead them out of the stable, but as Dick reached the door he heard a faint "Hist!" and a dark form appeared before him.

"It is I, Lizzie!" said a voice in almost a whisper.

"What is it, Lizzie?" asked Dick, in a cautious tone.

"I have come to warn you not to come to the house," the girl replied. "There are a dozen British soldiers there, and they are looking for you boys."

"Is that so?" murmured Dick; "thank you for warning us, Lizzie. You are a brave and noble girl."

"I slipped out at the back door and came straight here to warn you. You had better slip away at once, while they are in the house."

"Indeed we shall do nothing of the kind, Lizzie!" declared Dick. "What! slip away and leave you and your mother to be browbeaten by those redcoated scoundrels? No, we will remain right here, and wait until they have gone before we go."

"They may come and search the stable," suggested Lizzie.

"We will lead our horses out and over into the edge of the timber yonder, where we will tie them, and then we will wait and see what the redcoats do."

The youths did this, Lizzie staying with them.

"I won't return to the house until after they have gone," she said; "they have not seen me, and—and I don't want them to see me, they are such insolent fellows."

"Stay right here with us, Lizzie," said Dick. "It is better that you should do so, and I am sure your mother would

rather you would not re-enter the house while the British are there."

So the three remained where they were, and after the lapse of perhaps ten minutes they heard a stir at the house.

Then the voices of the redcoats were heard.

Then their footsteps.

"They are going to the stable to look for you there," said Lizzie, in a whisper.

"So they are," replied Dick. "But for you, Lizzie, they would have found us, too."

The redcoats went to the stable, and looked all around it.

It was evidently a searching party from New Brunswick.

Doubtless parties had gone out in every direction in search of the escaped prisoners.

"I'd like to give the scoundrels a few shots," said Bob.

"It wouldn't do, though, Bob," said Dick; "we don't want to do anything to get Mrs. McGrew into trouble."

"That's so; we don't want the redcoats to know that she has shown us kindness, or they would mistreat her."

"That's it exactly."

The redcoats looked in the stable, and all around it, but did not come out toward the timber.

Doubtless they appreciated the fact that if the fugitives had come this way, and had taken refuge in the timber, they could not find them.

Presently the redcoats gave up the search at the stable and returned to the house.

They were there only a short time, and then they took their departure.

As soon as they were gone, Dick, Bob and Lizzie went to the house.

"I am so glad Lizzie was enabled to get out of the house in time to go and warn you!" said Mrs. McGrew.

"So are we," smiled Dick.

Then, after a little further conversation, the youths mounted the horses, bade good-by to Mrs. McGrew, Lizzie and Jack, Jr., and rode away toward New York.

CHAPTER VIII.

JACKSON AGAIN.

It was now about ten o'clock.

"How far is it to New York, Dick?" asked Bob, when they were out in the road and headed northward.

"About twenty miles, Bob."

"We'll get there in the middle of the night, then."

"No."

"No? Why not? It won't take us more than three hours to go twenty miles."

"No, but the shortest way to New York, for us, is the longest way around, and we are going a roundabout way, Bob."

"Ah! You think it isn't safe to go direct?"

"I know it isn't, Bob. It hasn't been so very long since was there, and the ferryman would recognize me. We would have to go farther up the river before crossing."

"How far up the river do you think of going?"

"I don't know exactly, Bob. I think it will be a good plan for us to go to Hackensack first. Our forces are not in that position, you know."

"That's right."

"They may know of a place where we can cross the river."

"True."

"I rather think we can get across somewhere in the neighborhood of Fort Lee."

"That would bring us over on the north end of Manhattan Island."

"Yes; and then we would ride down into the city from the north."

"I see."

"It will not be so dangerous getting into the city from that direction."

"I judge not."

"No; they won't be looking for any one to come down from the north."

"We can get into the city by morning, even by going around, can't we?"

"Oh, yes."

The youths rode onward steadily.

It was two o'clock in the morning when they reached Hackensack.

They were challenged, and told the sentinel who they were.

They asked him about getting across the Hudson River and he told them that there was a man living a mile below Fort Lee, who had a small flat-boat that would carry the youths and their horses across the river.

He told them the man's name, and directed them how to go, in order to get there by the shortest route.

Then, thanking him, the youths rode onward.

It was only about five miles to the river, and the youths reached it at about a quarter after three.

They found the cabin of the man who owned the flat-boat.

Dick dismounted and knocked at the door.

There was no sound from within.

Dick knocked again.

"Who's thar?" came in gruff tones.

"A couple of persons who wish to be ferried across the river."

"Can't ye wait till mornin'?"

"No," replied Dick; "we wish to go across at once. It is important."

"Who air ye?"

"We are the right sort, Mr. Hampton," replied Dick.

"Humph! What sort is thet?"

"Well, we don't wear red coats."

"Good enuff! Jes' wait er minnet!"

There was no mistaking the hearty earnestness of the ones.

The man was a patriot, heart and soul.

A minute later the door opened and a man appeared, holding a candle in his hand.

He looked at the youths searchingly, and a good natured smile appeared on his face, as he said:

"I know ye, Dick Slater! I've seen ye afore!" and he tuck out his huge hand for Dick to shake.

The youth grasped the hand and shook it warmly.

"This is my friend, Bob Estabrook, Mr. Hampton," he said.

"I've heerd uv Bob, too," the man said, shaking hands with Bob. "So ye wants ter git ercross ther river, do ye?" He added, looking at the youths curiously.

"Yes, as quickly as possible," replied Dick. "We want to get down into the city before daylight, if possible."

"Oh, I see; yer on one uv yer spyin' experdishuns."

As Dick knew the man was loyal and true, he did not deny this.

Mr. Hampton came out of the cabin, and, closing the door, led the way down to the river bank.

The youths followed, leading their horses, as it was too sloping to ride down.

In a little cove was a flat-boat.

"Bring yer hosses right on," said the man; "this hyar boat'll hold ha'f er dozen hosses up all right, an' hez done t' menny a time."

The youths obeyed.

A few moments later the flat-boat moved slowly out into the river.

Mr. Hampton was too busy to talk, and no more was said until the other shore was reached.

Then the youths led the horses ashore.

Dick offered to pay the man, but he refused to take pay.

"Thet's all right," he said; "I'd be er purty feller ter ke pay frum yer boys, wouldn't I?"

The youths thanked him, and then Dick told the man that he expected to be coming back that way within a day

or two, and arranged to give a certain signal, when the man would come over with the ferry-boat and take them back across the river.

Then the youths bade him good-by, and, mounting, rode away.

"We'll get into the city shortly before daylight," said Dick; "and that is what we wished to do."

"Yes," said Bob.

They rode southward at a gallop, and an hour and a half later they were entering the city.

They rode to a livery stable that Dick knew of, and left their horses.

"We may wish to leave them here for two or three days," said Dick; "take good care of them."

"Certainly," was the reply.

Then Dick and Bob made their way to a hotel and had breakfast at six o'clock.

"What next, Dick?" asked Bob, after breakfast.

"I'll tell you, Bob," was the reply; "we won't dare walk about the streets of New York in broad daylight, as we are; we would be recognized by some of the redcoats, sure."

"Then what are we to do, Dick?"

"We will go to a costumer's who has a shop not far from here, and will get some costumes and make-ups that will disguise us completely, Bob."

"Say, that's a good scheme."

The two left the hotel and made their way to the costumer's.

Dick told him what he wanted—a costume for himself and one for his companion, said costumes to be effective as disguises in daylight.

"I can fit you out, my young friend," the costumer said.

"Go ahead!" said Dick.

Then the man took him into a back room.

He brought forth two costumes which would be just the thing, he was sure.

The youths donned the costumes.

Then the costumer, who was something of an artist in make-up work, painted and penciled and powdered the youths until, when they looked in the glass, they did not see any resemblance to their former selves.

Their own mothers would not have known them.

"What do you think?" asked the costumer, triumphantly.

"That is fine!" said Dick.

"It is all right!" declared Bob. "I don't know whether this fellow is Bob Esterbrook or not."

Dick laughed.

"It is the same with me," he said.

They deposited the value of the costumes with the man and then took their departure.

They felt safe as they stepped out upon the street.

They were sure that no one could possibly recognize them. It gave them a peculiar feeling of security.

They could go where they pleased and feel that they were not attracting attention.

This was just what they wished, too.

They did not want to attract any attention.

They preferred to not be noticed at all.

They wished to do the noticing themselves.

They wished to mingle with the British soldiers, if possible, and listen to their talk.

They intended going to General Howe's headquarters and hanging around there, in the hope of finding out something of interest and value.

Disguised as they were, these things were possible.

Otherwise they would have been impossible of accomplishment.

They walked slowly down the street, talking on indifferent topics.

They had their eyes open, however.

Whenever they came upon a group of redcoats they would stop and listen to what was being said.

In this way they picked up considerable information.

This manner of procedure got them into a difficulty presently, however.

They had paused near where a group of redcoats stood talking, and presently one, who seemed to be about half drunk, and in a bad temper, looked around and glared at the youths in an angry manner.

"Well, what are you standing there for?" he growled. "Why don't you move on?"

Dick and Bob exchanged glances.

The man was Jackson, the fellow Dick spanked with the sabre, on the road south of New Brunswick, the day before.

Doubtless, feeling the disgrace which had come upon him, through letting himself be handled in such a manner by a boy, he had gotten leave of absence, and had come to New York to have a spree.

"Do you hear?" he repeated, as neither of the youths answered at once.

"Not being deaf," replied Dick, quietly, "we could not very well help hearing."

This was just what the fellow was looking for—a chance for a fight.

He could give this saucy stranger a good thrashing, and thus retrieve himself to a certain extent, and it would relieve his surcharged feelings quite considerably.

"Ha! you are insolent!" Jackson cried. "You move on, and quick, too, if you know what is good for you!"

Several of the fellow's comrades were drunk, also, and they encouraged Jackson, and urged him on.

Dick and Bob stood perfectly still.

They were not the youths to move on at any one's order.

"Why should we move on?" asked Dick, quietly.

"Because I say so!" gruffly and dogmatically.

His comrades applauded.

"Because you say so, eh?"

"Yes."

"Who are you? Do you own the street?"

An exclamation of anger escaped Jackson.

"It doesn't matter who I am!" he cried; "I have ordered you to move on, and that is enough!"

"Oh, no; that is not enough. You are mistaken, sir!"

"Tell him who you are, old fellow," said one of his comrades.

"All right, I will do so, then. You wished to know who I am, so I will tell you. I am Reginald Jackson, of the British army, and every one will tell you that I am a dangerous man!"

"Jackson, eh?" remarked Dick, calmly; "let's see, that name is familiar. You are a member of a company of dragoons, are you not?"

Jackson started, and looked at Dick searchingly.

"I am," he replied, shortly; "what of it?"

"Ah, I thought so!" said Dick, coolly; "you are that fellow who was spanked with the flat side of your officer's sabre by a boy yesterday morning down near New Brunswick!"

Jackson's under jaw dropped.

His eyes seemed about to pop out of their sockets.

His comrades stared first at him and then at Dick, with open-mouthed amazement.

"What is that?" almost shrieked Jackson, finding his voice finally. "It's a lie! I'll break every bone in your lying carcass!"

And he leaped forward, the look of a fiend in his bloodshot eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

A LIVELY SCRIMMAGE.

Little Jackson thought that he had again encountered his opponent of the day before, when he had been spanked with his own sabre.

Had he suspected this he would not have attacked Dick. He had had a sufficiency of the youth the day before.

But he had gotten leave of absence, and had come to New York for the especial purpose of wiping out the memory of that happening.

One way of wiping it out was to get drunk and forget it. He had started to do this.

He had not yet got that far along, however.

His memory was still working.

The other way of wiping out the memory would be to use some one—any one—a terrible thrashing.

This would furnish balm for his wounded feelings.

And here was the very opportunity he sought.

He did not stop to ask himself how Dick knew he had been spanked.

The fact that he did know was sufficient.

You may be sure he had told none of his present boon companions of the affair, and when Dick spoke of it they had opened their eyes in amazement.

Jackson thought, of course, that he would have an easy time with this insolent stranger.

He was a good man physically, and had long been a sort of bully of the company of which he was a member.

His reign was ended now, however.

The spanking at the hands of the boy whom, he knew well, was Dick Slater, the patriot spy, had thrown him so far down in the estimation of his comrades that they would slap their fingers in his face if he tried to lord it over them.

But Dick Slater was the first person who had been able to handle him, and he was not afraid of finding another the next day who could handle him.

So he leaped forward, feeling confident that in this danger he would find an easy victim.

When he got within striking distance, he struck out at Dick's face with all his might.

Dick ducked his head just sufficiently to allow the fist to come over his shoulder.

At the same instant his right arm shot out.

The fist caught Jackson in the stomach.

He was coming toward Dick with considerable speed and force.

The impact was, therefore, quite severe, and the result was doubled up like a jack-knife, and sat down upon the sidewalk with a thud and a grunt.

An exclamation of amazement went up from Jackson's companions.

This came to them, as to Jackson, as a surprise.

Jackson sat where he had fallen.

He was gasping for breath, and sputtering at a great rate.

The blow had been a severe one, his own momentum having contributed to make it so fully as much as Dick's strength of arm.

The breath had been knocked and jarred out of the fellow.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Bob, with an innocent countenance. "He looks sick."

Dick smiled, but made a gesture for Bob to remain silent.

Jackson gasped and spluttered for a few moments, and then suddenly caught his breath.

Then he slowly and laboriously scrambled to his feet.

He seemed somewhat weak, however, and held his hands on his stomach.

One of his companions drew a flask from his pocket and handed it to Jackson, who seized it eagerly.

He placed the flask to his lips and took a long pull at it.

Then he handed it back, with a murmured "Thank you."

The fiery liquor seemed to put new life into Jackson.

He turned toward Dick, a fierce look in his eyes.

"Now I'll fix you!" he hissed.

"Perhaps so," replied Dick, quietly.

The youth did not seem greatly alarmed.

"There is no 'perhaps' about it!" hoarsely.

"Perhaps not."

Dick was as cool and calm as before.

"Go in and do the whelp up, Jackson!" urged the fellow who had given him the liquor.

"That's just what I am going to do."

Then Jackson advanced again.

This time he was more careful.

He had come to the conclusion that it would not do to be rash.

He felt his way forward, so to speak, and when he thought he was within striking distance, he struck out, straight for Dick's face.

The blow was parried with the utmost ease.

Dick was right at home in this sort of work.

His right arm shot out again.

Crack! the fist took Jackson on the jaw, and down he went again, at full length, this time.

A cry of anger and amazement went up from Jackson's comrades at this.

They did not like to see their friend knocked down in this fashion by a stranger—and one who did not wear a red coat, at that.

"That was a cowardly blow!" said one, in an angry tone.

"Is that so?" asked Dick.

"Yes."

"Why was it cowardly?"

"Because you didn't wait for him to get ready."

This was so absurd that Dick could not help laughing.

"Is it customary when two persons are engaged in a fisticuffs encounter, for one to wait till the other is good and ready?" he asked.

"Well," was the grumbling reply, "it wasn't the fair thing, don't you know."

"You're a liar, don't you know, if you say that!" said Bob.

That worthy was aching to get into the affair, anyway, and the talk of this fellow would, he thought, afford him the opportunity.

"What's that!" the fellow cried, wild with rage; "do you dare to say I am a liar?"

"Of course I do—and you are, too!" said Bob, promptly.

"By Jove! but this is more than I will stand from any one, don't you know!" the redcoat cried, and then he rushed at Bob.

He began striking out wildly with both fists, and as rapidly as he could.

Indeed, so rapidly did he strike that for a few moments Bob had all he could do to protect himself.

He was forced to give ground, and was even driven off the sidewalk into the street.

By this time the redcoat's strength was somewhat spent, however.

He was red-faced and panting.

Still he kept on trying to strike, but his blows would not have hurt an infant.

Then Bob took his inning.

He opened up on the redcoat with a shower of blows.

Bob could have delivered one blow that would have knocked the fellow down, but he wished to pay him back in his own coin.

So he sent in a shower of blows.

They were medium light blows, hard enough to hurt, but not hard enough to knock the fellow off his feet.

A few moments Bob kept this up, and then he sent in a hard one, squarely between the eyes, and down the redcoat went, with a thump.

"Get up!" cried Bob, whose blood was up; "get up, and I will knock you down again!"

The fellow was too dazed to obey at once, however.

The rain of blows and the heavy one at the last, together with the thump when he struck the ground, had scattered his wits to the four winds.

By this time Jackson had recovered from the daze into

which he had been thrown by Dick's severe blow on the jaw.

He scrambled to his feet.

With a roar like that of a wild beast, he again rushed upon Dick.

He tried the plan of striking out swiftly and fiercely, as the other fellow had done with Bob.

But he was no more successful than Bob's opponent had been.

He gave out even quicker.

Then Dick dealt him a tremendous blow that floored him in splendid style.

The comrades of the two, seeing that they were getting the worst of it, now decided to interfere.

More, they made up their minds to give the two youths a good thrashing, even if they did have to attack them in a body.

Had they not been drinking they might not have attempted a thing that was so unfair; but they had been drinking, and they did not stop to argue with themselves.

They rushed upon Dick and Bob.

There were about seven of the fellows.

One would have expected that they would speedily conquer the two who were opposed to them.

But the spectators who had drawn near to watch the combat were now treated to a unique spectacle—that of two young fellows proving themselves more than a match for more than three times their own number.

For Dick and Bob did so prove themselves.

They were young and agile.

They could get around with wonderful speed, and could and did evade the blows which were aimed at them without any very great difficulty.

The crowd, which was made up in the main of citizens, cheered the two to the echo.

There was something distasteful to their minds in seeing so many attack two, and their sympathies were with the two.

The youths fought now with an energy that would not be denied.

They did not fancy being set upon by so many, either, and they made up their minds to discourage the fellows all they could.

To tell the truth, Bob really enjoyed it.

He had not had a chance to exercise himself in this fashion for some time, and he improved the opportunity.

The redcoats were knocked down by Dick and Bob as fast as they could get up.

The youths received occasional blows, of course, but

ey were not such hard ones as they themselves were dealing out.

"Give it to 'em, Dick!" cried Bob.

Crack! Whack! Thud!

"Knock 'em senseless, old man!"

Biff! Bang! Whack!

Bob was in his element.

Dick said nothing, but he worked his arms to the best possible advantage.

It seemed as if redcoats were rolling on the ground instantly.

They resembled nothing so much as tenpins being bowled over.

The crowd cheered Dick and Bob on, and when it became evident that the two were getting the better of the combat, they shouted with delight.

Of course, there were some among the spectators who were the red coats of the British soldier, and they did not cheer.

Their sympathies, of course, were with their comrades.

Still even they could not but look upon their comrades with some disfavor.

For two reasons: For so many of them attacking two, in the first place; and for getting the worst of the encounter in the second place.

The combat was drawing near the end now, however.

The redcoats had been knocked down and thumped with such terrible effect by the two wonderful youths that they were almost exhausted.

They were a badly bunged-up looking lot.

Several of them had bloody noses.

The eyes of other ones were swollen almost shut.

Their cheeks were puffed up till they looked as if they had been stung by a thousand bees.

Altogether they were indeed a sorry-looking lot.

Dick and Bob, through the wonderful agility in leaping and dodging about, had escaped with so little damage as to scarcely worth mentioning.

All of a sudden the beaten redcoats turned and fled from the spot as if the Old Nick were after them.

Jackson was the first one to start, too.

He headed the procession.

He had gotten his friends into the trouble; he thought only right he should get them out—by leading the way in the race for safety.

They were followed by the jeers of the crowd.

Say, that was lively while it lasted, Dick!" said Bob, with a grin.

So it was," coincided Dick.

We gave them enough of it, though."

"Yes, and to spare."

"I guess they'll think twice before they tackle us again."

"I don't think they will bother us any more, Bob."

And in this Dick was doubtless right.

The crowd cheered the youths, and told them they were wonders, but the youths took the honors modestly, and did not remain long.

"Come, Bob," said Dick, "we will go on down the street, and see what we can see."

They walked on.

CHAPTER X.

THREATENED FROM ALL SIDES.

Dick knew where General Howe's headquarters were.

He led the way in that direction.

They were soon there.

As they drew near their attention was attracted to a cavalcade of brilliantly-uniformed soldiers which stood in front of the building.

"I believe that is Generals Howe's and Cornwallis' body guard, Bob," said Dick, in a low tone; "if so, they are starting for a trip, and the trip will be to New Brunswick, I am sure."

"I have no doubt but that you are right, Dick," said Bob. "Let's stop here and watch them."

The youths stood there, watching the gayly caparisoned horsemen.

Dozens of people were standing about also, so the youths did not attract any especial attention.

"Fine-looking lot of fellows, eh?" remarked an old man who stood near.

"Yes, indeed," replied Dick. Then, thinking he might secure some information, he asked:

"What's going on? Who are they? Where are they going?"

"Oh, there's nothing in particular going on. Those are Generals Howe's and Cornwallis' body guard, that's all, and they are getting ready to start on a trip of some kind."

"Ah! that's it, is it? I wonder where they are going?"

"Oh, I guess they are going down to New Brunswick. The main army is down there, you know."

"Yes, I know."

"I think they are going to begin an active campaign against the rebels under Washington."

"Likely that is it."

"Yes, when they return to New York they will have

Washington a prisoner, I expect, and his army will be captured or scattered to the four winds."

"Likely enough," said Dick, but he thought quite the reverse.

Two of the horses had as yet no riders.

Those two were to be ridden by the great generals, the youths decided.

And it proved to be the case.

Presently Generals Howe and Cornwallis emerged from the building, and were assisted to mount the horses by orderlies.

Then the cavalcade rode away.

"Come, Bob," said Dick, "let's follow them and see where they go."

"All right," and the two followed along after the body of horsemen.

As they expected, the cavalcade rode to the ferry which plied between New York and Paulus Hook.

They rode onto the ferry-boat, and it was soon moving across the river.

"That settles it, Bob," said Dick; "they are bound for New Brunswick."

"I think you are right, Dick."

"That means that they are going to begin the movement toward Philadelphia at once, Bob."

"Yes, I think so, old man."

"And we must get back to Middlebrook at the earliest possible moment with this information."

"I think that would be the proper thing to do, Dick. General Washington should know of this."

The youths hastened back to the costumer's.

They doffed the costumes, donned their own clothes, paid the costumer, and hastened out.

They made their way to the livery stable where they had left their horses, ordered that they should be bridled and saddled at once, then they paid for their horses' keep, and, mounting, rode away.

They headed toward the north.

"We would not dare risk crossing the river at the Paulus Hook ferry," said Dick; "we will have to go back the way we came."

An hour and a half of lively riding brought them to the bank of the river at the point where they had disembarked from Hampton's boat the night before.

Dick fired his pistol.

Then after an interval of a few seconds, he fired another shot.

This was the signal that had been agreed upon.

A few minutes later the boat was seen putting out from the opposite shore.

"There he comes," said Bob.

"I'm glad he was at home," said Dick. "Otherwise we might have had to wait a long while before being able to get across the river."

"Back ag'in so soon ez all this?" remarked the man, as the boat touched the shore.

"Yes," replied Dick; "we were so fortunate as to secure the information we wished, and are in a hurry to get back to the commander-in-chief with it."

"Thet's ther way ter do bizness," said Hampton, smilingly.

Then the youths led their horses onto the boat and the man pushed off and started back.

As he did so three redcoats mounted on horses rode down to the shore, and called to him to take them across.

"Ther boat won't hold so many," he called back, with a wink at the youths; "I'll come right back an' git ye."

"It'll hold all of us," was the reply, in an angry tone from one of the redcoats; "come back and take us on."

But Hampton did not stop.

"I couldn't kerry so many ter onct," he replied; "I'll come right back ez soon as I git acrost."

"I guess ye don't want no redcoats er-comin' acrost ther same time with ye, do ye?" he remarked, with a grin.

"No, we would prefer that they wait till after we have gotten across," replied Dick.

The redcoats shouted and yelled in a threatening manner, but the ferryman refused to return.

"They kin wait," he said.

When they reached the opposite side of the river, the youths went ashore, and, after offering to pay the man and having their offer refused, they thanked him, mounted their horses and rode away.

"Are you going to return by the way of Mrs. McGrew's house, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes, we had better do so, I guess, Bob. We will go there a little while after dark, and can have supper there after which we can ride on to Middlebrook."

"That suits me all right, Dick. Mrs. McGrew is a good cook."

"So she is, Bob; and she will give us the best she has in the house."

"She will that, Dick."

The youths stopped at a farm-house at midday and had dinner.

They remained long enough for their horses to eat and rest, and then they mounted and rode forward.

They kept their eyes open.

They were now in a part of the country where they might run onto a band of redcoats at any moment.

The sun sank lower and lower.
At last it went down behind the western horizon.

"How much farther is it, do you think, to Mrs. McGrew's, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I don't think it can be more than four or five miles, Bob."

"Then we will get there soon after dark."

"Yes."

It grew dusk quickly, and then the twilight deepened to night.

The youths knew where they were, however.

They felt that they would be enabled to find their way.

They were right in this, for an hour later they reached the home of Mrs. McGrew.

"Let's go straight to the stable and put the horses away and feed them, Bob," said Dick.

"All right."

They did this, and then returning to the house, Dick looked upon the door.

"Who is there?" called out a voice which they recognized as that of Mrs. McGrew.

"The two young men who were here last night—Dick and Bob Estabrook," replied Dick.

Instantly there were hurried footsteps, and a fumbling at the door.

Then the door was opened and Mrs. McGrew stood there, candle in hand.

"So you are back!" she exclaimed; "and so soon? We did not expect to see you back this quick."

"Well, we got through with our work in New York quicker than we expected," said Dick; "and here we are."

"And we're right glad to see you," said the good woman, heartily.

"Yes, indeed!" said Lizzie.

Then the beautiful girl blushed and looked confused.

"We are glad to hear you talk like that!" said Dick, with a smile.

"We are, for a fact!" declared Bob.

The youths entered the house and sat down.

Mrs. McGrew asked them if they had had their supper.

When informed that they had not, she set to work, with Lizzie to help her, to get the youths' suppers.

The youths were very hungry, and when the meal had been prepared and was placed on the table, they sat down and ate heartily.

They had just finished eating and risen from the table when the door opened and a British officer strode into the room.

At sight of Dick and Bob he drew his sword with an exclamation.

"Ah! I have you now, you cursed rebel spies!" he cried. But he had made a mistake.

Quick as a flash Dick leaped forward.

He seized the officer's wrist with his left hand and tore the sword from his grasp with his right.

Then he hurled the redcoat to the floor with such force as to almost break some of his bones.

At this instant Lizzie stepped quickly to Dick's side.

"You are threatened from all sides!" the girl said in a whisper. "Come with me, and I will show you a hiding-place."

The officer leaped to his feet at this instant.

Crack!

Dick's fist took the fellow on the jaw and he went down dazed.

"Quick!" cried Lizzie; "you are in great peril! The house is surrounded by the British!"

"Show them into the secret room, Lizzie!" said Mrs. McGrew in a low voice.

"Yes, mother."

Lizzie led the way out of the room and into the adjoining room.

The youths followed willingly enough.

It would not do to let themselves be captured by the British now.

They must get to General Washington with the information that Generals Howe and Cornwallis had come to New Brunswick and joined the main army.

The girl had said she would conduct them to a hiding-place.

Her mother had mentioned a secret room.

The youths soon learned what this meant.

The room in which they found themselves was smaller than the one they had just left.

It was as wide, but was shorter.

The reason it was shorter was soon made manifest.

The girl walked quickly to one corner of the room, took hold of a large wooden peg, which was ostensibly to hang things on, and pulled.

To the surprise of Dick and Bob, a section of the wall swung inward.

A space about four feet wide and the width of the room was revealed to their view.

"Quick! Go in there!" whispered Lizzie. "The redcoats will not find you in there."

"This is all right!" whispered Bob.

"Yes, indeed!" said Dick.

Then they stepped through into the little secret room, and the section of the wall was closed by Lizzie.

It was dark in the little compartment, but the youths did not mind this.

They believed they were safe, and that was the main thing.

All was quiet for a few minutes, and then a stir was heard in the adjoining room.

Voices were heard and the trampling of feet.

The walls were quite thick, however, and the sounds could not be heard very distinctly.

The youths knew what it meant, however.

The redcoats had entered the house, and would now make search for the two youths.

Presently the voices and footsteps became plainer.

The redcoats had entered the room of which the secret room was in reality a portion.

The youths could understand what was said now.

"They may be gone, as this woman says," said a voice; "but we will search the house thoroughly. I don't see how they could have escaped from the house without being seen by some of the men."

"Nor I," replied another voice; "they must be in the house."

"Well, we'll find them if they are."

"So we will!"

"Do you know they are those wonderful boy spies, Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook?"

"Are they, really?"

"Yes, and it would be a big feather in our caps if we could capture them."

"So it would."

"Well, I think we will find them in this house."

"I don't know whether you will find us or not," thought Dick.

"I'd like to get my hands on the fellow who struck me!" said one of the voices. "It would afford me great pleasure to see him hanged for the spy that he is!"

Bob nudged Dick.

The fellow was the one who had entered the house so unceremoniously, and whom Dick had disarmed and then knocked down.

The men tramped around and searched the room carefully.

Then they went into another room, the house being a good-sized one, with four rooms on the ground and the same number above.

The youths could keep track of the redcoats by the sense of hearing.

They heard the fellow go upstairs.

They heard the trampling of the redcoats' feet above their heads.

They are making a close search for us, old man," said Bob, in a whisper.

"Yes, they don't think we could have escaped from the house."

"That's right; well, I don't think they will find us, they will have to come to the conclusion, finally, that we did escape."

"Yes."

Presently the redcoats came back downstairs.

They were in a bad humor.

They had been unable to find any traces of the two patriot spies.

"I hope they'll go away now," said Bob.

"So do I, Bob; well, I guess they will do so."

This proved to be the case.

The redcoats evidently came to the conclusion, after a while, that the two youths had escaped out of the house after all, and they took their departure, and went to search for them.

When the British had been gone perhaps fifteen minutes Lizzie came and opened the movable section, and the youths stepped out into the room.

"Thank you, Lizzie," said Dick. "Have they gone?"

"Yes, they have gone, Dick. They made up their minds, finally, that you had escaped unseen by any of the men, and they have gone to search for you."

"We owe a large debt of gratitude to you and your mother, Lizzie."

"Oh, no; we are glad to be able to render you aid."

"Can we have the use of the horses to ride to Middlebrook, Mrs. McGrew?" asked Dick.

"Certainly, Dick!" was the reply. "We shall be glad to have you take them."

"Thank you. We will return them soon—or we will make your husband come home and visit you, and bring the horses."

"Oh, that would be good of you!" said the woman, her eyes kindling.

"Is there any word you wish us to take to him?"

"I have written a letter, which I shall be glad to hand you to him, Dick."

"And I shall be glad to hand it to him, Mrs. McGrew. She handed him the letter, and he placed it in his pocket.

Then he and Bob shook hands with Mrs. McGrew, Lizzie and Jack, Jr., and left the house.

They made their way to the stable, got the horses mounted and rode away in the direction of Middlebrook.

They kept a sharp lookout for redcoats, but did not see any.

"Say, we were in considerable peril back there a while ago, Dick," said Bob, breaking the silence.

"Yes, Bob; we were threatened from all sides, but thanks to the secret room, we escaped from the redcoats."

"Yes; if it hadn't been for that hiding-place, we would have been captured, sure!"

It was only about six miles to Middlebrook, where the patriot army was stationed, and the youths rode it easily in an hour.

As soon as they had put their horses away, they went to the house occupied by General Washington as his headquarters, and reported.

He was well pleased with the report.

"So Generals Howe and Cornwallis have come down to New Brunswick, have they?" he remarked, meditatively; "well, that means that they are going to try to move across New Jersey and attack Philadelphia!—at least that is the significance I should attach to their action. I will call a council of war at once."

Then, complimenting Dick and Bob on their good work, and thanking them, he dismissed them.

"Now, let's hunt Jack McGrew up, and give him the matter, Bob," said Dick.

"All right, Dick."

The youths did this, and when they found Mr. McGrew and handed him the letter from his wife, he was as delighted as he was surprised.

He read the letter eagerly, and then shook hands with the boys, and congratulated them.

"My wife tells me you had a close call at our house this

evening," he said; "and that but for the secret room you would have been captured by the redcoats."

"That is the truth of the matter, Mr. McGrew," said Dick; "we were in great peril—were threatened from all sides, but the secret room afforded us shelter, and we escaped the redcoats as slick as you please, thanks to your wife and daughter. We owe them a big debt of gratitude, sure!"

"You don't owe them anything!" said McGrew, heartily; "they were only too glad to be of service to you."

"I know that, sir; but it doesn't lessen the favor any."

"Not a bit of it," declared Bob.

Next day General Washington began getting ready to checkmate any move which the British might attempt to make.

Armed with the information which Dick and Bob had given him, he felt that he would be able to do it.

THE END.

The next number (13) of "The Liberty boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' LUCK; OR, FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE," by Harry Moore.

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